

342 Men slept in this structure; they and the boys ate, worked, and passed the time of day there. Women, however, entered only to serve the men.

Women's houses were each about half the size of the carbet. Their construction was the same, except that each had only a single doorway and was provided with a reed partition separating the room where the women and children slept from the kitchen.

The storage platforms were built on piles and roofed, but open on the sides.

352 **Household furniture.**—Mats were used to cover the doorways of the houses. Within, hammocks were the chief articles of furniture (pl. 93). Made of a network of cotton thread, they were 6 feet (1.8 m.) long and 12 feet (3.6 m.) wide. The ends were tied by cords to two posts in the wall of the dwelling; often the cords extended along the sides of the hammock as decoration. Some hammocks were painted red or black. They had a small packet of ash at each end, which was believed to make them last longer. Small wooden tables and stools were used in many houses; some had cabinets in which to store weapons and utensils. The rafters also were a favorite storage place.

[484] When on canoe trips the *Carib* made temporary shelters by erecting posts, to which they attached hammocks, covering them with a roof of palm leaves.

DRESS AND ADORNMENT

291 **Clothing, hairdress, and toilet.**—Like the *Arawak*, the *Carib* had no clothing except for a small cotton apron worn by women over their genitals (pl. 93). In historic times this was ornamented with beads. Every

302 morning men washed themselves and sat in the carbet while the women combed their hair, anointing it with oil, and painted their bodies red. The women then dressed themselves in the same manner. The paint, urucú (rpuou), was made by mixing oil with boiled and ground seeds from the bixa plant. It was brushed over the whole body, partially for decoration and partially as a protection against insects. On ceremonial occasions men also used black paint made from genipa; they had their wives paint it in streaks over their faces and bodies, using tiny hair brushes.

• [332] Rich black hair was considered a sign of beauty. Both men and women wore it long, cutting only the part above the eyes. They let it hang free or sometimes bunched part of it on the back of the head, tying it with a cotton cord and decorating it with tail feathers of the macaw (arara). Only slaves had their hair cut short in the *Arawak* manner. Men plucked their beards, which they considered a deformity.

304 **Deformation and scarification.**—A mother flattened both the forehead and the back of her child's head. The *Carib* pierced the ears, nasal septa, and lower lip for the insertion of fishbones, feathers, stone pendants, or pieces of wood, stone, or shell. They used the latter only temporarily,

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Colic: An infusion of the seeds or leaves of the bay tree (Carib, Achuru: *Pimenta acris*).

Debility in women: A concoction made from the tuber called Carib (or red) chalotte (*Cipura* sp.?).

Lack of appetite: Water in which has soaked Cimaruba chips (wild quassia, *Simarouba amara*).

These are straightforward household simples. Others partake more of the nature of charms. Of the latter, the best known are: "Surette de montagne," a sweet-smelling vine found only in the depths of the high-woods, and "l'envers caraïbe" (*Maranta indica* sp.?), a rare species of small-leaved native arrowroot (not the ordinary white or red maranta) with reddish leaf stems and tubers that go straight down and are said to intertwine or "plait" themselves. Native tobacco and a stupefying variety of ivy, or caapi, are known, but are not, as far as I could learn, now used. Earth or clay is eaten by some, but the practice is regarded as a vice by the community. On the other hand, many vouch for the good effects of one's own or another's urine, drunk warm, as a cure for poisoning or stomach ache (an emetic?); while others chew the gum of the gommier (*Dacryodes hezandra* and *Icica heptaphylla*) in order to improve their wind."

[261] • [832] An aphrodisiac, known as "poudre pine tortue" (powdered turtle's penis) is made and sold in the island.

787 "A Carib does not dream for nothing," I was told. He believes his dreams announce or portend grave events affecting himself, his family, or his friends. It certainly is amazing how often such omens prove correct.

753 All serious sickness and death itself are looked upon, not as the result of disease or age, but as the works of extra-natural agencies known as piai. Thus, little confidence is placed in ordinary medical means of restoring health. The Caribs do not fear death, but are terrified at the idea of the hospital, and especially of being separated from their home environment in their last moments.

754 A piai, to become effective, must be instituted by three persons—usually two men and a woman. The actual harm in any piai is wrought by spirits who have, so to speak, no personal grievance, but, bullet-like, are merely unleashed and set onto a given person when he or she unwittingly touches some object—such as a stick or branch placed across the path—harmless in itself, but magically dealt with by the piai men in order to make it the agency for releasing the piai. So one may, by good luck or cunning, escape a piai intended for oneself, or fall, by ill chance, under a piai intended for somebody else.

"They are taking life tonight," said an old Carib friend of mine the night he died of what I took to be a pleurisy brought on by the enforced wearing of wet clothes. I have often wondered whether he referred to the persons he believed to have bewitched him or to the death spirits themselves. Three years later (two weeks ago as I write now)

THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE ISLAND CARIBS OF DOMINICA

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Timber of bois d'inde is used by the *Tainos* for posts, sole-plates, etc., while the wood is considered to be the best in Dominica for the manufacture of charcoal, the principal kitchen fuel of the island. The pounded wood is also employed by the Carib as a Wick in torches made of the gum from the gommier (*Dacryodes excelsa*). [342]
[372]
[373]

Specimen citation: 578, 1237, 2067, 2672.

LEGUMINOSAE. PULSE FAMILY.

Andira inermis (Wright) Humboldt, Bonpland, and Kunth, Nov. Gen. 6: 385. 1833.

Andira jamaicensis Urban, Symb. Ant. 4: 298. (1905).
Bastard Mahogany. — Angelin, L'Angelin. — *uakdbu* («house-post»).

This species of tree is found throughout the West Indies and continental tropical America, and in Dominica occurs at lower to middle elevations.

The hard, red-brown wood of angelin is very durable and is used by the inhabitants of Dominica, Caribs included, for posts, boards and all types of heavy constructional work. [313]

Specimen citation: 3332.

Arachis hypogaea Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 741. 1753.
Peanut. — Pistache. — *māli* (cf. Tupi *mandubi*).

The peanut is widely cultivated in the warm temperate and tropical regions of the earth. Although earlier writers believed in an Old World origin this American species is probably indigenous to Brazil, but was also known in pre-Columbian times by the ancient Peruvians (1) (11).

Caribs eat the seeds either raw or roasted, and an oil is also prepared by grinding. Raw seeds are considered to possess aphrodisiacal properties. The pistache is also an ingredient in a ritual bath described under *Ocimum micranthum*. [262]
[832]
[755]

Specimen citation: 3328.

Cassia alata Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 378. 1753.
Herpetica alata Rafinesque, Sylva Tell. 123. 1838.
Ringworm Shrub (18). — Desay.

1824 *Richeria grandis* Vahl, Eclog. 1: 30. 1796.

Bois Bandé.

This large tree, common in the montane rain-forests of Dominica, ranges from Montserrat to Trinidad.

[314] The timber of bois bandé is widely used by the Caribs for
[632] boards, while a decoction of the bark is reputed to be an aphro-
[224] disiac. Hunters are careful not to cut or slash at this particular species when setting out for the chase for they believe any injury to such trees would cause their hunting to be unsuccessful.

Specimen citation: 567, 1318, 1895.

Ricinus communis Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1007. 1753.

Castor Bean. — Carapate (from the Carib word, *karapa*, meaning «oil»). — *lamáho* (w), *sulúanū* (m).

A native of the Old World, much cultivated and spontaneous in the West Indies and continental tropical and subtropical America.

[302] The Castor Bean is planted in every Carib dooryard and is known as carapate (the name more correctly applied to *Carapa guianensis*). Ricinus oil is now substituted for the oil of *Carapa guianensis* for hair dressing. Formerly castor oil was possibly mixed (in place of the oil of *Carapa*) with biset pigment (*Bixa orellana*) to form body paint. The leaves of the Castor Bean are heated and used both as a compress for internal pains and for massaging the spleen. A special blended purgative tea given after parturition uses castor oil as an ingredient (see *Jatropha* spp.); while another tea, a «cure» for gonorrhea, includes the seeds of this plant (see *Solanum tortum*).

[278] Specimen citation: 570.
[752]
[846]

Sapium caribaenum Urban, Symb. Ant. 3: 308. 1902.

La Glu, Lagli. — *ulekene*.

This tree is a native of the higher volcanic islands of the Lesser Antilles, and is recorded from Guadeloupe to St. Vincent. In Dominica it occurs chiefly at middle elevations although on the wetter windward side it approaches the coast.

[223] The white sap of this species makes the best bird-lime utilized by the Carib. The lime is obtained by making incisions on the